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## LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT



# Non-Union Contractor Caused' Hard Rock Hotel Collapse

*The New Orleans hotel was being built by unlicensed, non-union workers*

by [Brian Young](#) Oct 15, 2019



People on the streets of New Orleans fled for their lives on Saturday as part of the Hard Rock hotel collapsed onto the street. As pedestrians fled, nearly 100 workers were trapped or injured in the structure. 30 would end up going to the hospital, 3 were found dead and it took hours before all of the workers were accounted for. According to sources from the city, as late as Monday night, pieces were still falling off the building.

As dust and debris covered multiple city blocks on the edge of the famed French Quarter, questions have begun to arise about how a building that was under construction could just collapse. According to Hard Rock, Citadel Builders LLC was contracted by Kailas Companies, owner of the project, to build the Hard Rock Hotel New Orleans.

According to Andy O'Brien, the Secretary Treasurer of the Southeast Louisiana Building and Construction Trades Council, the IBEW and the Plumbers union have been holding informational pickets outside of the hotel for weeks in an effort to inform residents of the danger of the project.

"Citadel is not a union contractor," said O'Brien. "Whenever they show up, we aren't far behind." In other words, when Citadel sets up shop on a construction project, the unions are quick to picket and protest.

Some of the issues that the unions were concerned about included the use of non-licensed workers, hiring undocumented workers, and misclassifying employees on the project as independent contractors.

This isn't Citadel's first brush with the law. In August, the contractor pleaded no contest and agreed to pay a fine for using unlicensed contractors on their jobs. If the union's intel is correct, it would appear that Citadel hasn't learned from their fine and continued to use non-licensed workers.

"Our collective hearts go out to the workers and their families impacted by this horrible tragedy," said O'Brien. "While our organization represents 16 unionized construction locals, we have always felt it is our higher responsibility to look out for, protect, and represent in any way possible all workers involved in construction in Southeast Louisiana."

As the contractor and the city rushed to shore up the project, Union Ironworkers rushed in to help. According to Troy Bates, 9 highly trained Ironworkers brought in a 500-ton hydraulic crane from Baton Rouge. Instead of letting the trained union workers do their job and use the crane to stabilize the building the contractor said he didn't want any assistance from union hands. He kicked them off the job and let a non-skilled employee operate the crane.

With three workers dead and dozens injured the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) will be opening an investigation into what happened. In the meantime, the Building Trades Council has announced that they will be holding a vigil on Thursday. The vigil, which will take place at 6 PM at the Molly Marine Statue on Canal and Elk St, will be held to remember those who died and to pray for the injured. They will be joined at the vigil by the Faith-Labor Alliance, Step Up Louisiana, and Congreso de Jornaleros, a day laborers organization.